RFA - STRENGTHENING THE NGO SECTOR
POSTED: 01-27-03
CLOSING DATE: 03-24-03

USAID/DCHA/PVC
M/OP-03-467
Set of Q & A #1 –(See Amendment 1 POSTED: 2-12-03)
Set of Q & A #2 - POSTED: 3-5-03

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SET OF Q & A #3 - POSTED: 3-12-03

1) Question: Registration
Is it possible for a proposal to be reviewed if the security clearance requirement from the registration checklist is still unresolved as of the submission deadline? (The assumption would be, of course, that any possible award would need to await full and final registration clearance.)

Response:
The technical review committee can consider an application while the registration is being processed. The stated assumption above is correct, if an applicant is competitive in the review process, but the registration is incomplete. However, the registration must be completed before a recommendation is made to the Agreement Officer to award a cooperative agreement.

2) Question: NICRA
The organization has yet to negotiate a NICRA with USAID. Would that be a constraint to the review of the proposal, or could that be handled alternatively and resolved in the time between now and any prospective award?

Response:
The technical review committee can review an application before the NIRCA is established. Please refer to the cost application guidelines of the RFA for guidance on what needs to be submitted in lieu of a NICRA.

3) Question: Letters of Commitment and Support

- We're seeking confirmation that letters of commitment are no longer required for collaborating organizations or proposed project staff.

- Will Letters of support submitted by partner organizations be counted within the 20-page limit for the Annex (RFA, p.21, 23), or should they be placed in with the required attachments that don't count against the 20-page limit (RFA, p.23)?

- We will be proposing a project based in Central America, and conceivably some of our Letters of Support might be in Spanish. Is this acceptable, if they are accompanied by translations?

Response:
- Letters of commitment from cooperating organizations and staff are not required, although whenever possible it is recommended they be included. They would not count against the page limit. However, bear in mind that under the program management approach, the technical review committee will be assessing the relationship between the applicant and proposed subawardees and the staffing plan, including key staff qualifications.

- Letters of Support or Commitment will not count against the required attachment 20-page limit.

- Letters of Support or Commitment in a foreign language that are accompanied by an English translation are acceptable.

4) Question: Applications to Missions:

If the proposed project operates in different eligible countries as a regional initiative, must every USAID mission in each country within the project area be sent a copy of the proposal by March 28, 2003?

Response:
Yes. Applicants must submit copies of the application to each of the contact persons identified in Annex D for each proposed country. For countries that fall under the WARP program in West Africa, one application to the WARP mission in Mali is sufficient.

5) Question: Inclusion as a subgrantee in more then one application
We have been approached by two organizations who are applying as 'prime'. Is it possible for us to apply under both organizations, without forfeiting either of their chances of winning.

Response:
Yes. An organization may be identified as a subgrantee in one application without jeopardizing a second application. However, a PVO may only submit one application as the prime.

6) Question: Submission date
 Amendment 1: Item 11. "the hour and date specified for receipt of Offers {x} is extended." Item 14 does note mention an extension as an amendment. Has the submission date in fact been extended?

Response:
The submission date has not been extended. All applications are due to PVC on March 24 and to the relevant Missions on March 28. Please see amendment 2 posted on 3/10/03.

7) Question: Activity List and Past Performance References
- Page 23. "required attachment that do not count against the 20 page limit" (Bullet n. 5: "List of current and previous USAID funded programs, the funding levels and brief description of relevant activities." Is this to be an exhaustive list dating back to the firm's incorporation? For how many years should performances be listed. Bullet 5 asks for "past performance references-a listing of awarding organizations within the last three years for relevant work" Is this excluding USAID awards?

- For the Past Performance References- "a list of awarding organizations within the last three years of relevant work" is requested.
  a. Are these only organizations that were awarded within the past three years?
  b.Or does this include grants that may have been awarded prior to the three year mark and have been active for the past three years?
  c. What about grants that were active for only one or two of those three years?

Response:
It's not necessary to list every relevant activity since inception. For the list of current and previous USAID funded programs, the last five years will suffice. An applicant has the option of providing a more extended list if it so chooses and can do so within the page limits.

The past performance list can include both USAID and non-USAID funded activities. The list may include grants that were awarded prior to the three year mark but have been active during the past three years-including grants that were active for only one or two of the last three years.

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8) Question: Performance Plan and Planning Matrix

- Page 22. Item b (4) calls for "a performance and financial monitoring/measurement and evaluation plan" Item b (5) requires a "A Planning Matrix with information that explains how a particular set of activities will achieve a specific objective and how results will be measured. Include technical and capacity building objectives, indicators, estimated baselines and targets. Provide a matrix for overall program and one for each site. How do items b(4) and b(5) differ?

- Under the Program management approach a "Planning Matrix" is requested. Can this be included in the annex or does it need to be in the body of the proposal?

Response:

A Planning Matrix is different from a Performance and Financial Monitoring Plan, regarding content and use. However, these two program management elements are related and complementary. Both elements should be included in the body of the application's text. A full performance-monitoring plan will be required of the successful applicants at the Detailed Implementation Plan stage, six months after the award is made.

A Planning Matrix summarizes the results-frame for the program, by strategically linking its main objectives and corresponding activities, key indicators (that measure outcomes or major changes the program aims at making, rather than simple outputs) and the main data sources, methods of data collection, analysis and use. The Planning Matrix summarizes what the entire program wants to achieve, how it plans to achieve its objectives, and what type of credible evidence will be produced to demonstrate its impact. A complete planning matrix includes baseline data and performance targets for each indicator.

In contrast, a Performance and Financial Monitoring Plan builds on and supports a Planning Matrix. It responds to a program's main objectives that were identified in the Planning Matrix and provides more information on the matrix indicators and measurement/data management methods. Performance and Financial Monitoring Plans specify schedules, direct, and coordinate program monitoring and evaluation tasks.

9) Question: Subcontracting Arrangements

The new PVC strategic framework and RFA shifts the program emphasis to local NGO capacity building. Are there any guidelines for what this means in terms of the ability to transfer resources to local NGOs during implementation? Will recipient PVOs be able to sub-contract on an as-needed basis during the program, or will all sub-contractual arrangements need to be specified in the proposal (with names of recipient organizations, timing of tranches, amount of tranches, etc.) (Specifying all sub-contracts in the proposal would, of course, be very difficult in some cases, though perhaps possible during the DIP phase.) Will sub-contracting under the new PVC framework require any additional financial reporting requirements for PVOs?

Response:

U.S PVOs awarded Cooperative Agreements in response to this RFA must request prior approval from the Agreement Officer per 22 CFR 226.25(c) (8) if a subaward is contemplated but had not been identified in the initial application. Technical approval by the Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) is also required to ensure that programmatic work remains consistent with the overall technical objectives of the award. A PVO that issues a subaward bears the sole responsibility for the programmatic, legal, and financial management of its subgrantee. Therefore the determination of funding amounts as well as reporting requirements are at the discretion of the prime but should be stated in the subaward agreement. Likewise, flowdown provisions from the prime's award to the subaward will provide additional guidance particularly with respect to non-U.S. NGO subawards.